

Message Text

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70

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-11 ADP-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-12

RSR-01 /060 W

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R 021930 Z MAY 73

FM ACMONSUL GUAYAQUIL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2648

INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GUAYAQUIL 465

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, EC

SUBJ: GUAYAQUIL AIRPORT TO BE CLOSED FOR THREE MONTHS TO MOST
INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

1. ACCORDING TO LOCAL CIVIL AIR OFFICIALS, GUAYAQUIL'S SIMON BOLIVAR AIRPORT WILL BE ALMOST COMPLETELY CLOSED TO INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS FOR THREE MONTHS, BEGINNING MAY 20. PURPOSE OF THE CLOSING IS TO EFFECT A " COMPLETE REPAIR" OF THE 2.2 MILE MAIN RUNWAY SO THAT IT CAN BETTER WITHSTAND THE WEIGHT OF MODERN FOUR- MOTOR JETS. IN THE INTERIM, THE TAXIWAY WILL BE USED FOR ALL OPERATIONS AND WILL BE LIMITED TO DAYLIGHT HOURS AND PROPELLOR- DRIVEN AIRCRAFT OR THE SMALLER JETS.

2. AFFECTED INTERNATIONAL CARRIERS INCLUDE BRANIFF, LUFTHANSA, AVIANCA, KLM, AIR FRANCE, LAN CHILE, IBERIA, AND AIR PANAMA. OF THESE, ONLY AIR PANAMA FLIES ANYTHING SMALL ENOUGH - 727/100' S & DC- 9' S - TO NEGOTIATE SIMON BOLIVAR USING THE TAXIWAY. (THIS WAS PROVEN OUT SOME WEEKS AGO DURING A BRIEF CLOSEDOWN OF THE MAIN LANDING STRIP, ALTHOUGH THE PROCEDURE IS CONSIDERED HAZARDOUS). THE LOCAL- FLAG AIRLINE, ECUATORIANA, STILL FLIES DC-6' S AND LOCKHEED ELECTRAS AND WILL NOT BE INCONVENIENCED BY THE SHUTDOWN. (NEITHER WILL THE PURELY LOCAL LINES, SAN AND SAETA, WHICH ALSO USE PROP- DRIVEN AIRCRAFT.)

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3. BRANIFF OPERATIONS CHIEF, JOSE SALVADOR INFORMS THE CONGEN NONE OF HIS GUAYAQUIL FLIGHTS WILL BE ABLE TO BE REROUTED THROUGH QUITO AS THAT AIRPORT IS ONLY OPEN TO DAYLIGHT OPERATIONS. MOST OTHER AIRLINES WOULD BE SIMILARLY AFFECTED, BARRING A MAJOR RE-SCHEDULING OF LONG- DISTANCE FLIGHTS, WHICH IS UNLIKELY. SALVADOR SEES NO POSSIBILTiy OF BRANIFF SUBSTITUTING 727' S ON THE GUAYAQUIL RUN, DUE TO LACK OF EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITY. HE ALSO QUESTIONS THE SAFETY OF USING THE TAXIWAY, WHICH IS ONLY 73 FEET WIDE AND HAS LIGHT STANCHIONS INSTEAD OF FLUSH- MOUNTED ILLUMINATION. IN ANY CASE, HE FEELS THE STRIP IS DEFINITELY FAR TOO SHORT FOR THE MODEL 200 " STRETCHED" VERSION OF THE 727 WHICH IS IN MORE COMMON USE FOR INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS.

4. SALVADOR FEELS THE SHUTDOWN DECISION WAS PRECIPITOUS AND UNNECESSARY, AND IS ATTEMPTING TO HAVE LOCAL CIVAIR AUTHORITIES ENLIST THE SERVICES OF OUTSIDE CONSULTING ENGINEERS. THE STRIP, WHICH IS OF ASPHALT, RESTS ON THE SAME OOZE WHICH UNDERLIES THE WHOLE GUAYAQUIL AREA. IT HAS DEVELOPED AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF SUBSIDENCE AND HOLING, BUT HE FEELS THAT A LESS DRASTIC APPROACH IS INDICATED THAN TEARING UP THE WHOLE CENTER PORTION OF THE RUNWAY AND REPLACING IT WITH CONCRETE - WHICH WOULD LIKELY BE EVEN MORE PRONE TO SUBSIDENCE. HE ALSO FEELS THAT THE 90- DAY CLOSE-DOWN ESTIMATE IS GROSSLY OPTIMISTIC AND THAT THE PROJECT REPAIR WILL TAKE AT LEAST FOUR MONTHS. IN THE MEANTIME, HE PREDICTS VERY SERIOUS CIVAIR SITUATION FOR ECUADOR, WITH ALL INTERNATIONAL FACILITIES STRETCHED BEYOND CAPACITY FOR THE DURATION. DECLASSIFY ON RECEIPT.
LUBENSKY

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